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23 November 1956

NAGY FERENC

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORDS

SUBJECT: Background Meeting of Ferenc Nagy with Members of the Press and Government Officials

1. On Tuesday, November 20, I attended a meeting addressed by Ferenc Nagy which was primarily concerned with his report and comment on the situation in Hungary. Mr. Nagy spent some time with developing a clear account of the events leading up to the Hungarian revolution and the measures taken by the Soviets to suppress the revolution.

2. Mr. Nagy was critical of U.S. policy to the point of bitterness, though he maintained a tone of restraint and statesmanship throughout. He felt that the U.S. made a tragic mistake in giving first priority attention to the crisis in the Middle East rather than to Hungary. He stated his personal belief that from the standpoint of U.S. national security the Hungarian developments were much more significant than those in the Middle East. He sincerely believes that the Hungarian revolution is the beginning of the disintegration of the Soviet empire. Mr. Nagy stated that, if the U.S. in its instructions to Ambassador Lodge had given priority to Hungary and if the U.N. had moved as rapidly on Hungary as it showed itself able to do in the Middle East, then Hungary might today be a free nation. He said that he had reliable information that during the brief span from October 26 to November 3 when Imre Nagy was in power there was a real opportunity to obtain the withdrawal of Soviet troops had U.N. observers been on the scene in Hungary. Mr. Nagy feels certain that the Soviets never would have attacked on November 4 if the U.N. had had its representatives in the country.

3. Mr. Nagy was eloquent in his defense of WFB and VOA. He said that he personally listened on a high-powered radio, both from Switzerland and Austria, to many of the broadcasts of WFB and VOA in addition to the broadcasts of the freedom radios. He said that the two American radios had done a magnificent job of assisting in the communications of patriot forces and that the revolution was, at least from the standpoint of communications, made more successful as a result. Mr. Nagy was categorical in his assertions that neither WFB nor VOA had raised false hopes of help from outside during any of the time that he was listening. Mr. Nagy stressed that the revolution was the result of a long, burning hatred of the Hungarian people against Soviet oppression. This was not a revolution arising from hunger and food, but rather a revolution sparked entirely by that basic political hunger for freedom.

5. Mr. Nagy stated he felt that Imre Nagy, though a Moscow trained communist, was now the great hope for Hungary. Mr. Nagy said that he considered Imre Nagy to be man whom he would call brother and for whom he would give his own blood. He said that Imre Nagy's statements during his last days in power will make him go down in history as a Hungarian patriot and hero. Imre Nagy, he said, had gone beyond national communism to real freedom when he proclaimed neutrality for Hungary. And stated that Hungary was no longer a member of the Warsaw Pact. Mr. Nagy was asked whether Imre Nagy would be supported by the Hungarian people if he came back to power as a result of some compromise with the present anti-Stalinist leaders in Moscow and/or Marshall Tito. Mr. Nagy said that he thought the people would support Imre Nagy even under these circumstances because they know the true desires of Imre Nagy, and they know that if the Red Army is to leave, the steps toward freedom must be achieved more gradually. In reas so, Mr. Nagy stated he thought that Hungary would have its freedom from Soviet domination before another year has passed. He said further that it would be a freedom which would go beyond what exists today in either Poland or Yugoslavia.

6. Mr. Nagy feels strongly that the Hungarian legislature must be reorganized in order to reflect more accurately the real aspirations of the Hungarian people. Such a reorganization he feels must be created primarily from the recent escapees who actually fought in the Hungarian revolution. The other representatives should be people who represent the political beliefs of the more liberal anti-communist parties of Hungary, including the Smallholders, the Peasant Party and the Social Democrats. Mr. Nagy stated strongly that the Hungarian people no longer supported the representatives of the old landed aristocracy and nobility, the dukes, the counts and the barons.

6. Attached are two clippings from the Washington Post and the Washington Daily News which contain references to some other points made by Mr. Nagy during this meeting.

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Attachments (2)

NO ENCLOSURES FOR I.

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